



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

FOUR MEXICAN NATIONALS INDICTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING

Mexican girls were forced to work as prostitutes at Houston-area bars

HOUSTON, Texas — Four Mexican nationals were indicted by a federal grand jury here yesterday with conspiracy to smuggle minor Mexican girls and young Mexican women into the United States for the purpose of forcing them to engage in prostitution, announced U.S. Attorney Chuck Rosenberg, Southern District of Texas; Acting Assistant Attorney General Bradley J. Schlozman, Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice; and Special Agent-in-Charge Bob Rutt, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Investigations in Houston.

This indictment is the result of an investigation conducted by ICE Houston special agents, the FBI, and other member agencies of the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance (HTRA) in Houston, Texas.

The single-count indictment alleges that Gerardo Salazar, a Mexican national, also known as "El Gallo," 40, is the leader of a group of men who smuggled minor girls and young women from Mexico into the United States. Using deception, threats of harm, physical force and psychological coercion, Salazar compelled their service for prostitution in Houston-area bars. Gerardo Salazar is a fugitive; a warrant for his arrest is outstanding.

Gerardo Salazar's two nephews, Angel Moreno Salazar, 24, Jose Luis Moreno Salazar, 20, and an associate, Salvador Fernando Molina Garcia, 37, are accused members of the group alleged to have provided women, all Mexican nationals, for purposes of prostitution. Angel and Jose Luis Salazar, and Salvador Garcia, all Mexican nationals illegally in the United States, are in federal custody and will remain in federal custody pending trial. They are expected to appear in court next week for arraignment before a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

Federal law prohibits persons from conspiring to use force, fraud and coercion to cause persons to engage in commercial sex acts, or to knowingly cause persons who have not yet attained the age of 18 to engage in these commercial sex acts.

All four defendants are accused of conspiring together to (1) recruit, entice, harbor, transport, provide and obtain young Mexican women and girls, and benefiting financially from participating in a venture knowing that force, fraud and coercion would be used to cause the young Mexican women and girls to engage in commercial sex acts; and to (2) entice, harbor, transport, provide and obtain young Mexican women and girls, and benefit financially from participating in a venture knowing that the girls under the age of 18 years would be caused to engage in a commercial sex act.

According to allegations in the indictment, the conspiracy involved:

- (3) smuggling or arranging to smuggle young Mexican women and minor girls into the U.S.;
- (4) forcing the minor girls and women to engage in prostitution in bars in the U.S. using deception, threats of harm, physical force, psychological coercion to compel their service;
- (5) requiring the minor girls and women to turn over their earnings to financially benefit the defendants;
- (6) intimidating, threatening and coercing the young Mexican women and minor girls through beatings, threats of harm, close supervision and rules to maintain their services as prostitutes in their employ.

Gerardo Salazar is alleged to have placed two minor Mexican girls — ages 16 and 17 — into service as prostitutes in a Houston area bar, having beaten a third young Mexican woman for encouraging another girl to quit prostitution and leave; and having beaten a fourth young woman for not reporting a co-worker's mistakes to him. Initials identify all four victimized young Mexican nationals only.

Angel Salazar is alleged to have demanded that one of the young women turn her earnings from prostitution over to him at the end of each day. Salvador Garcia is alleged to have beaten yet another young Mexican woman because he believed she was concealing from him some of her earnings from prostitution. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

Anyone having information about the whereabouts of Gerardo Salazar, aka. "El Gallo," is urged to contact the FBI in Houston, Texas, at (713) 693-5000, or their nearest FBI office.

Anyone having knowledge of others subjected to similarly described conduct are urged to contact the Houston office of the FBI at the above number, or the Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance through the Houston office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at: 281-774-4900.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ruben R. Perez and Joe Magliolo of the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Southern District of Texas, and trial attorneys Lou DeBaca and Jennifer Dominguez of the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, will prosecute this case.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.